

Poliomyelitis (Polio)
Report immediately to Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821

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Definition

Polio is caused by an enterovirus that lives in the throat and gastrointestinal tract.

Signs and symptoms

Most people with polio infection will not experience any symptoms. Some will experience minor symptoms such as fever, fatigue, nausea, headache, flu-like symptoms, stiffness in the back and neck, and pain in the limbs which may resolve. A very small percentage will suffer permanent paralysis of the limbs (usually the legs).

Transmission

Polio is spread person-to-person through contact with either the throat secretions or the stool of an infected person.

Diagnosis

Poliovirus is diagnosed through laboratory testing of a stool, blood, cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), or pharyngeal sample.

Treatment Recommendations

- If symptoms are noted, the child should be referred to their provider for evaluation
- There is no specific pharmaceutical treatment, only respiratory support and anti-inflammatory treatment for brain swelling

Role of the School Nurse

Prevention

- Most children should be vaccinated for poliovirus prior to attending school
- The importance of polio vaccination should be communicated to children and their parents
- Good hand hygiene and thorough hand washing should be emphasized, particularly after using the toilet
- Disinfectants or bleach along with proper masking and usage of gloves should be used by staff to clean up diarrhea or vomit from a potentially sick child
- Toys and commonly used surfaces or items should be routinely disinfected
- Students or staff planning to travel to certain areas where polio is still common (West and Central Africa, Eastern Mediterranean, and Middle East-Afghanistan/Pakistan) should be made aware of the danger of polio infection

Exclusions

- School exclusions should be discussed on a case-by-case basis with Maine CDC by calling 1-800-821-5821

Reporting Requirements

- Polio is a reportable disease – report immediately suspected polio-like symptoms to Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821

Resources:

- Maine CDC polio website (including fact sheet) <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/vaccine/polio.shtml>
- Federal CDC polio website <http://www.cdc.gov/polio/>
- Parent information:
<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/polio/downloads/PL-dis-polio-color-office.pdf>
- Information for school staff: <http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4215.pdf>
- Educational materials: http://kidshealth.org/kid/index.jsp?tracking=K_Home